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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
22 December 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Prospects for the Dominican Situation

1. The dismal events of last Sunday in Santiago have gravely sharpened existing animosities in the Dominican Republic. President Garcia Godoy's efforts to create an atmosphere conducive to national elections in the spring have received a severe jolt. Indeed, the restoration in Santo Domingo and maintenance of tranquility will continue to depend almost entirely on the presence of the Inter-American Peace Force (IAPF). No change in this grim prospect is likely for months to come.

2. It is still not clear who set off the bloody battle in Santiago--that is, to say who fired first. Both the ex-rebel lieutenants and the local military units were clearly spoiling for a fight after almost a week of tensions and country-wide labor disturbances. The President has appointed a commission of respected and moderate members of his cabinet to determine the facts in the matter. The commission is to report to him on 23 December. What the commission can usefully recommend in the current circumstances is open to question; so, too, is Garcia Godoy's ability to act on the facts (if they are indeed ever ascertained) rather than on the basis of the political imperatives of the moment as he sees them.

3. Rooting out the guilty party or parties at this point is in any event probably irrelevant. Both the rebels and the military are convinced of each other's culpability and more suspicious than ever that the other side is capable of the most sinister machinations.

4. The rebels will be less willing than ever to divest themselves of their weapons, to break up

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their still-sizable military stronghold at the 27th February camp, or to place themselves at the mercy of former comrades in arms by accepting reintegration. They will appeal, and probably with some success, to other elements of the left to join them in demands for changes in the military high command, and in other actions which will exacerbate, rather than relieve, tensions.

5. The military commanders have recently come to a working understanding with Garcia Godoy. But after the events in Santiago they will regard any effort to effect command changes as a vindication of earlier fears that the provisional President is a prisoner of the left. And they are now likely to feel that the demonstrated untrustworthiness of the rebels has justified their prolonged resistance to Garcia Godoy's efforts toward reintegration.

6. In this atmosphere of renewed tensions, Garcia Godoy's effort to resolve problems by persuasion and ingenuity rather than by force and bluntness is seriously endangered. He may try to make concessions all around to resolve the furor--say, by trying to relieve some of the military commanders and perhaps by finding foreign assignments for some of the top rebels. The consistently optimistic President would then probably return to the painstaking task of integrating the rebels into the military establishment. In current circumstances, however, such moves by Garcia Godoy are not likely to solve the basic problems; even the mere decision to make them could provoke resistance.

7. We do not foresee any change in this grim prospect for months to come. There may be a pause in violence until the presidential investigatory commission has reported its findings and the President attempts to make concessions. But given the existing underlying bitterness, strikes and violence are likely in any of the larger cities--Santo Domingo in particular. The extreme left, along with the young toughs, will attempt to exacerbate these incidents through pillage, vandalism, and terror. To control these outbreaks Garcia Godoy will be obliged to rely increasingly on the Inter-American Peace Force to back up his own military and police. This will pose the danger that Garcia Godoy will become

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more identified in the popular mind with both the "foreign invaders" and the "reactionary" military. No other responsible, democratically oriented Dominican is likely to be willing to take up Garcia Godoy's burden for him if for any reason he should depart the scene.

8. An election is possible only because of the presence of the IAPF, but will resolve nothing so long as the armed rival groups still exist. Like most Dominicans, both the rebels and the military believe that there are only victors and vanquished. They will continue to subordinate Garcia Godoy's larger purpose of preparing the country for meaningful elections to settlement of what they regard as the principal issue: "who won the April rebellion." If Bosch or some other PRD candidate is the victor the military is not likely to let him take office. If the victor is Balaguer the chances for a return to stability would be slightly better. Some elements of the left would probably reconcile themselves to his rule, but the more extreme groups would not accept his election and would be likely to turn to insurgency.

9. The foregoing analysis suggests three possible conclusions: a) The Dominican civil war is not over, merely contained, and not very well contained at that. b) In a context of barely suppressed violence, Communist exploitation of bitter national animosities is the only constant; its effort clearly is to polarize the political situation by turning as many non-Communists of the left against the military and police as possible. c) The policy pursued so far of attempting to unify antagonistic peoples needs the essential ingredient of time.

10. After elections and for some time thereafter conditions probably will not be such as to permit the withdrawal of the IAPF. A prolonged IAPF presence would have to be requested by the new president. In its present composition the IAPF would inevitably become the target of local resentments. However, if the new president were to find himself in a position where he felt obliged to call on other Latin American countries for sufficient contingents to change the preponderant US complexion of the force, these resentments would be allayed to some extent.

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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